

Title of Project: Elders as Pen Pals

Grade Level: 1st – 3rd grade

Number of Students Participating: 50

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Teacher: Ms. Ozuna & Ms. Olson

School: Highlands Elementary

District or County: Boise School District

Overview/Description of Project:

First graders were assigned an elderly pen pal from an assisted living center who may not have family or friends locally to visit. They initially met their pen pal on a field trip to the assisted living center, and then wrote monthly letters. During Christmas the students made Christmas ornaments for the elders.

Goals:

Make a new friend with an elderly person, learn about different life styles, cultures and generations. As a result of this service it was hoped the students would have more understanding and empathy towards senior citizens. Enhanced reading and writing skills.

Core Content Areas:

(teacher completes this section)

English/Language Arts: writing skills; sentence structure; reading.

Social Skills: meeting and interviewing pen pals.

Art: Drew pictures to accompany letters. Made Christmas ornaments for elderly.

PARC MODEL STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

STEP 1: PREPARATION

Contacted the Agency on Aging to get referrals of elders who would like to be pen pals. Planned field trip to have students meet their pen pals and ask them questions. The following books were read to give 1st graders a feel for elderly people:

Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mem Fox

“Can you do this Old Badger?”

“Somebody Loves you Mr. Hatch”

The students chose topics to write about each month, and created a list of questions they wanted to ask their new pen pals. They also chose what pictures they wanted to share with their pen pals.

STEP 2: ACTION

The students went on a field trip to meet their pen pal and ask their questions. The students wrote and received monthly letters from elderly pen pals. There were various art projects each month to accompany the letters.

STEP 3: REFLECTION (Reflection is not sequential; rather it is encouraged throughout the lesson)

The students wrote and journaled about what they liked about having pen pals, and what they learned. The class also spent time talking about the field trips and how they felt.

STEP 4: CELEBRATION

Reflection letters were shared with parents and staff. A photo slide show was prepared of the class field trip to present to students and families.